

In this Issue: Supporting Inquiry Learning

This issue explores how teachers can use primary sources to guide students through the inquiry process and create an active learning environment.

Inquiry is inherent to teaching with primary sources. These raw materials of history—original documents and objects which were created at the time under study—compel students to draw on their prior knowledge, personal experiences and critical thinking skills to construct meaning. Teachers play an essential role in primary source-based inquiry learning by carefully selecting primary sources, encouraging and sustaining curiosity with probing questions, and modeling analysis and reflective practice.

Connecting inquiry to learning is certainly not a new instructional strategy. Countless educators, including Socrates and John Dewey, have advocated inquiry-based learning in one form or another. An iterative, often non-linear process, inquiry learning is reflective throughout but may be deconstructed into several phases. To successfully support students through the inquiry process, a teacher must first understand its various phases, both in theory and practice. In this issue's feature article, former American Association of School Librarians (AASL) president Barbara Stripling explores the inquiry phases (wonder, connect, investigate, construct, express, and reflect) and describes how teachers can use primary sources to facilitate inquiry learning.

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Teaching with Primary Sources

The Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Program works with universities and other educational organizations to offer professional development that helps teachers use the Library's digitized primary sources to deliver effective instruction. Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly provides information and materials that support this goal.

For more information about Teaching with Primary Sources or to identify a TPS consortium member in an area near you, please visit the web site at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps>.

Teaching Inquiry with Primary Sources

by Barbara Stripling

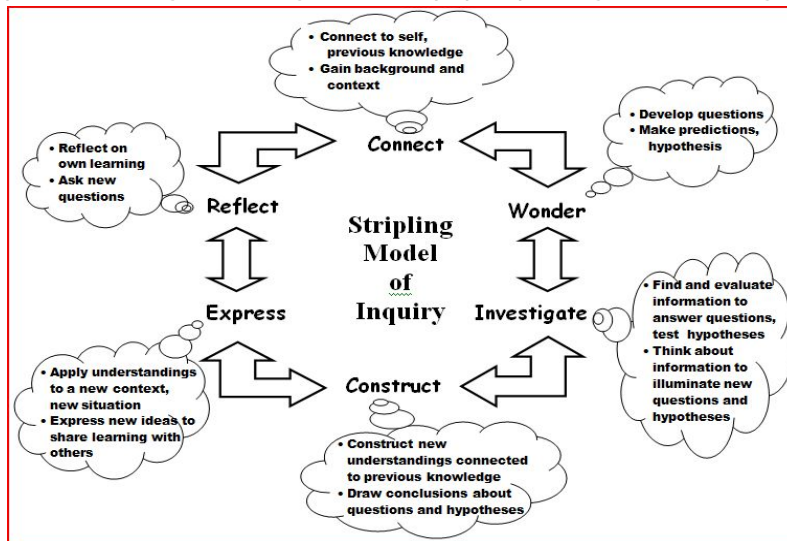
Why is inquiry important for student learning?

Inquiry is a process of active learning that is driven by questioning and critical thinking. The understandings that students develop through inquiry are deeper and longer lasting than any pre-packaged knowledge delivered by teachers to students.

Inquiry-based learning follows a process that progresses through phases, but is recursive and reflective throughout. The six phases and their thought processes are detailed in this diagram:

Why should primary sources be used for inquiry?

By their very nature, primary sources engage students in inquiry. First, they transform the learning process by provoking critical thinking: questioning; making inferences; interpreting different points of view; using critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate; drawing conclusions; and pulling together disparate pieces of evidence to think conceptually.



Second, primary sources engage students both emotionally and personally because the sources represent authentic voices and images. Students connect to the people who produced or were subjects of the primary sources as they rarely, if ever, connect to textbooks and other secondary sources. Finally, the conflicting nature of primary sources helps students see the complexity of issues and recognize the importance of context for credible interpretation. This multiple-perspective approach is particularly important for historical inquiry.

How can primary sources be used during the phases of inquiry?

Primary sources effectively support learning throughout the inquiry process when educators select appropriate sources, teach students essential thinking skills, and carefully structure learning experiences. A brief example will illustrate the use of primary sources. An American History teacher and school librarian have collaborated to develop a unit on immigration from 1850 to 1950, focusing on the essential question of: How does society's treatment of minority groups during a crisis reveal deeply embedded societal attitudes and values?

Connect: Primary sources can be used during the initial phase of inquiry to open students' minds to the possibility of interpreting and questioning an information source, in contrast to secondary sources that shut off questioning because they appear to be authoritative and complete. At the beginning of the unit, students are presented with two to three brief documents that reveal conflicting points of view about the treatment of Chinese immigrants in the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

Connect Phase of Inquiry		
<u>Guidelines for Selecting Primary Sources</u>	<u>Skills & Strategies to Teach</u>	<u>Cautions to Consider</u>
Find primary sources that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect to major theme or concept • Represent alternative perspectives • Present conflicting evidence 	Show students how to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify prior knowledge and misconceptions • Identify point of view and its effect on information presented • Use concept mapping to develop framework of overall themes, major concepts • Make valid inferences • Develop context through acquiring background knowledge 	Be aware that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of context & background knowledge makes interpretation of primary sources difficult • Students without clear conceptual focus may see primary sources as disconnected bits of information • Students may develop misinterpretations based on their limited prior exposure

Wonder: Students should develop focus questions to guide their inquiry investigations. In the sample unit, students are provoked to ask probing questions when they see published and official documents that advocate for equitable treatment of the Chinese after the earthquake and other published documents advocating for the removal and exclusion of the Chinese.

Wonder Phase of Inquiry		
<u>Guidelines for Selecting Primary Sources</u>	<u>Skills & Strategies to Teach</u>	<u>Cautions to Consider</u>
Find primary sources that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contain provocative or conflicting images and texts • Represent major facets of overall topic or theme • Provide enough detail to invite interpretation, provoke questions 	Show students how to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop focus questions at different levels of thought that lead to manageable investigations • Connect focus questions to larger theme or essential question 	Be aware that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students tend to use primary sources as illustrations only, without probing deeper into their meaning • Students tend to be enticed by graphic images and might ignore relevant text-based sources

Investigate: Students will use a combination of primary and secondary sources to pursue their questions in depth. To help students locate high-quality digital primary sources from multiple perspectives, teachers and librarians may want to provide the URLs for specific digital collections or sources as well as guide students to find their own sources.

Investigate Phase of Inquiry		
<u>Guidelines for Selecting Primary Sources</u>	<u>Skills & Strategies to Teach</u>	<u>Cautions to Consider</u>
Find primary sources that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent a variety of formats • Offer different perspectives • Provide in-depth information on relevant topics and questions • Are appropriate for students' reading levels • Allow students to corroborate evidence 	Show students how to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the authority, purpose, point of view, and accuracy of sources • Corroborate evidence by using multiple sources • Take notes on main ideas and supporting evidence • Make inferences • Interpret evidence 	Be aware that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' lack of content knowledge makes valid interpretation of primary sources difficult; teachers must carefully scaffold this thinking process

Construct: This phase is probably the most difficult for both teachers and students because it involves teaching students to organize and draw conclusions from information they have found, to confront conflicting ideas and form their own evidence-based opinions, and to be ready to take a stand and defend it. Students' conclusions should relate to the essential question of the inquiry unit. Educators may want to model how to form an argument by taking a previously studied primary source and analyzing it with the class, not for content, but for the development of a line of thinking with corroborating evidence. An editorial, a political speech or debate, a documentary film, a photo essay or collection of photos around a theme would work well.

Construct Phase of Inquiry		
<u>Guidelines for Selecting Primary Sources</u>	<u>Skills & Strategies to Teach</u>	<u>Cautions to Consider</u>
Find primary sources that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect to essential question and theme • Represent a point of view with supporting evidence • Show explicit development of a line of thinking • Represent a variety of formats 	Show students how to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize information into main ideas and supporting evidence • Compare evidence for alternative viewpoints • Draw conclusions and forming opinions based on evidence 	Be aware that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may have limited experience with drawing valid conclusions or forming evidence-based opinions; they will need support and modeling of the thinking processes involved

Express: The *Express* phase is essential to inquiry learning because, when students develop a product to demonstrate their new understandings and share with others, they solidify their own learning. Students should know how they will be expected to demonstrate their learning at the beginning of any inquiry-based assignment so that they can find appropriate evidence as they conduct their investigations. For example, producing a feature article for a class magazine will require both images and text.

Express (cont):

Students will be more motivated and engaged throughout the inquiry experience if they are assigned relevant and creative products, like conducting a mock Oprah Winfrey interview, producing an article for an electronic magazine, or developing a political ad campaign. Teachers and librarians can select primary sources from today, like television footage, web site articles and campaign posters, as authentic examples.

Express Phase of Inquiry		
<u>Guidelines for Selecting Primary Sources</u>	<u>Skills & Strategies to Teach</u>	<u>Cautions to Consider</u>
Find primary sources that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent a variety of formats, if appropriate • Include authentic examples* of the format that students are expected to produce • Connect to the types of communication that students recognize and relate to 	Show students how to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think creatively to generate an original approach to develop a final product • Employ writing, speaking, and visualizing skills appropriate for developing an inquiry-based product • Use technology to create a final product 	Be aware that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research has shown that students must be taught the skills needed for creating products (especially those involving technology) or they will ignore content learning and focus on production only

Reflect: Reflection is embedded throughout the inquiry process, but it is especially important at the end of a learning experience for students to think about what they have learned about the topic or idea and about inquiry itself. Although there are predictable points during inquiry at which students tend to become frustrated or unsure, students will benefit from analyzing their own challenges and successes. Inquiry is a cycle. Each inquiry experience should lead students to ask themselves some final reflective questions that propel them into further inquiry:

- ◊ What new questions do I now want to answer about the topic or idea?
- ◊ What inquiry skills do I need to work on to improve my next project?

Reflect Phase of Inquiry		
<u>Guidelines for Selecting Primary Sources</u>	<u>Skills & Strategies to Teach</u>	<u>Cautions to Consider</u>
Find primary sources that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models of exemplary work (either student-created products or real-world examples) 	Show students how to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective questioning • Metacognitive thinking strategies • Peer consultation and feedback 	Be aware that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection should not be confused with evaluation and the assignment of a grade. Even students who have received a high grade should reflect on their process and product and set goals for future inquiry

What final tips help teachers and librarians use primary sources successfully for inquiry-based teaching and learning?

Primary sources play an increasingly important role in inquiry because of the expansion of digitization and the development of valuable digital collections like those available from the Library of Congress. To successfully use primary sources in inquiry:

- ◊ Focus the inquiry experience on big ideas and themes;
- ◊ Frame the learning experience with an inquiry process;
- ◊ Explicitly teach and scaffold the critical thinking and information skills of inquiry;
- ◊ Confront students with both conflicting and corroborating evidence; and
- ◊ Engage students in locating and interpreting primary sources on their own.

Using primary sources during inquiry-based learning empowers students to develop deep understandings of academic content and a portfolio of thinking strategies and skills that are essential for lifelong learning.

Barbara Stripling is the former president of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and current Director of Library Services for the New York City School Library System. Her previously published work about inquiry-based teaching and learning includes:

"Inquiry-Based Learning." In *Curriculum Connections Through the Library: Principles and Practice*, edited by Barbara K. Stripling and Sandra Hughes-Hassell. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2003.

"Inquiry: Inquiring Minds Want To Know." *School Library Media Activities Monthly* 25 [Sept 2008]: 50-52.

"Inquiry-Based Teaching and Learning: The Role of the Library Media Specialist." *School Library Media Activities Monthly* 25 [Sept 2008]: 2.

Research and Current Thinking

For each issue, Teaching with Primary Sources Consortium members submit summaries of and links to online resources—articles, research reports, Web sites, and white papers—that provide research and current thinking relating to the theme. This Research & Current Thinking focuses on inquiry learning.

Research: Improving Critical Thinking Skills in History

(Savich, C., 2008) "The purpose of this action research project was to investigate approaches and techniques that would improve critical thinking skills in history classes at the secondary level. The research methodology consisted in a comparison of the inquiry or interactive method of teaching history with the lecture method. The research results demonstrated that when critical thinking skills were emphasized under the inquiry method, students achieved higher scores on tests, quizzes, and assignments and gained a deeper and more meaningful understanding of history. Critical thinking skills were shown to be effective in achieving a more in-depth and meaningful understanding of history by high school students, but relied on the integration of the critical thinking skills with subject content and on student motivation."



Grammar school children gathered around a table doing woodworking projects while teachers watch nearby in a classroom.

Library of Congress. Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933. American Memory.

Historical Inquiry with Fifth Graders: An Action Research Study

(McCormick, T., Social Studies Research & Practice, Volume 3, Number 2, July 2008)

"This article describes an action research investigation in which the author examined the effects that a six-week, historical, inquiry based unit on the American Revolution had on 119 fifth-graders' interest in studying history. Results suggest that the historical, inquiry-based unit positively influenced students' motivation and interest to study history both in and outside the classroom. Based on the findings of this study, instructional strategies that piqued students' own questions and interests appeared to be the key to facilitating their motivation to learn history."

Using Inquiry to Teach Social Studies

(Newby, D., & Higgs, P., The Charter Schools Resource Journal, Volume 1 No. 1, Winter 2005)

The authors describe this paper as an attempt to "...present viable, inquiry methods for teaching K-8 social studies." In the authors' search for best practices in social studies instruction, they identified programs and models having the four major teaching and learning standards established by the National Council for the Social Studies (2000). The authors provide examples in which teachers provide opportunities for students to participate in inquiry processes; engage in collaborative, substantive, and reflective discussions; use cooperative learning structures, speak their minds, listen respectfully to the contributions of others, and engage in problem-solving and decision-making.

Powerful Learning: Studies Show Deep Understanding Derives from Collaborative Methods

(Barron, B. & Darling-Hammond, L., Edutopia, October 2008) Cooperative learning and inquiry-based teaching yield big dividends in the classroom. This article explores the research that provides evidence of the efficacy of these instructional strategies. The article states, "A growing body of research demonstrates that students learn more deeply if they have engaged in activities that require applying classroom-gathered knowledge to real-world problems... Research shows that such inquiry-based teaching is not so much about seeking the right answer but about developing inquiring minds, and it can yield significant benefits." The authors also discuss the shifting roles for teachers in a collaborative, inquiry-based learning environment.

Inquiry-Based Learning Workshop

Concept to Classroom Web Site, Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2004. This interactive online "workshop" guides the reader through an overview of inquiry-based learning, how it differs from a traditional approach, the benefits to student learning, and how to use inquiry-based learning in conjunction with other educational techniques.

If you would like to access links to the resources cited above please visit the online version of this edition of the Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly online at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly>.

Learning Activity - Elementary Level

VOICES FROM THE DUST BOWL: CONNECTING THE PAST TO THE PRESENT ACTIVITY

Overview

In this activity, students personally connect to the Dust Bowl Migration through song lyrics of the time. Intended for use as an activity within a larger unit of study about the Great Depression, students analyze the lyrics of migrant worker songs to learn more about this period. Using these primary sources, students identify various aspects of migratory life as starting points for research. Lastly, students creatively express their discoveries about the lives of Dust Bowl migrants by writing poems, song lyrics or stories.

Objectives

After completing this learning activity, students will be able to:

- Describe one or more aspects of the lives of individuals forced to migrate from the Dust Bowl
- Analyze song lyrics written by Dust Bowl migrants for information about their lives
- Research a topic relating to the Dust Bowl Migration, referenced in song lyrics
- Write a poem, song lyrics or story to creatively express new understandings about the Dust Bowl Migration from a first-person perspective, drawing from primary and secondary sources

Time Required

Two class periods

Grade Level

5 - 6

Topic/s

Culture, Folklife

Subject/Sub-subject

Social Studies, Language Arts (Writing and Reading)

Standards McREL 4th Edition Standards and Benchmarks

Historical Understanding

Standard 2. Understands the historical perspective

United States History

Standard 23. Understands the causes of the Great Depression and how it affected American Society

Language Arts: Writing

Standard 1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Language Arts: Reading

Standard 5. Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

Credits

Activity adapted from "The Great Depression," a unit plan created by Gared Chrismer and Amy Thornton, Waynesburg University School of Education students, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania

View and Print the complete learning activity:

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/pdf/Summer2009ElementaryLevelLearningActivity.pdf>



Lange, Dorothea. "Oklahoma dust bowl refugees. San Fernando, California." June 1935. From Library of Congress, *America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from FSA-OWI, 1935-1945.*

Learning Activity - Secondary Level

"WAS ABRAHAM LINCOLN AN ABOLITIONIST?" ACTIVITY

Overview

In this activity, students engage in the complex questions of slavery and abolition in the 1850s and 1860s. Intended for use within a larger unit of study, students will first review prior knowledge about these topics and define the term, "abolitionist," together as a class. Working in small groups, students investigate Abraham Lincoln's position on the subject of the abolition of slavery by analyzing his own writings for evidence. Lastly, students present a case for or against applying the term "abolitionist" to Lincoln based on their primary source findings.

Objectives

After completing this learning activity, students will be able to:

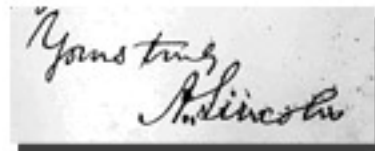
- Define the term "abolitionist"
- Satisfactorily analyze Lincoln's writings for evidence of abolitionism
- Establish a position on the question of Lincoln's abolitionism
- Present a case for or against applying the term "abolitionist" to Lincoln, using his writings as evidence

Time Required

Two class periods

Grade level

8 - 12



Topic/s

African American History; Presidents; War, Military

Subject/Sub-subject

Social Studies

Standards McREL 4th Edition Standards and Benchmarks

Historical Understanding

Standard 2. Understands the historical perspective

United States History

Standard 12. Understands the sources and character of cultural, religious, and social reform movements in the antebellum period.

Language Arts

Standard 4. (Writing) Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Standard 7. (Reading) Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts.

Standard 8. (Listening and Speaking) Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Credits

David Hollander, Kennedy Junior High School, Naperville School District 203, Illinois

View and Print the complete learning activity:

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/pdf/Summer2009SecondaryLevelLearningActivity.pdf>

Teacher Spotlight



**David
Hollander**

In each issue, we introduce readers to a teacher who has participated in Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) professional development and successfully uses primary sources from the Library of Congress to support effective instructional practices.

This issue's Teacher Spotlight features David Hollander, an eighth-grade social studies teacher at Kennedy Junior High School in Naperville, Illinois. The TPS program at DePaul University in Chicago nominated David, a 20-year teaching veteran, for his effective classroom use of primary sources to support inquiry learning. In this interview, David discusses teaching strategies and his favorite Library of Congress online resources.

How did you learn about the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Program?

The TPS program at DePaul University offered an introductory workshop at my school district's technology office.

What was your motivation to participate in your local TPS program?

Although I was already teaching with primary sources, I thought it would be great to learn about new strategies and resources. The TPS workshops provided structure to my search for and use of primary sources appropriate to the middle-level classroom and

oriented me to the digitized collections of the Library of Congress.

Tell us about the first time you tried using primary sources in the classroom.

I began using primary sources early in my teaching career. For example, I used the wonderful personal correspondence between John and Abigail Adams to engage my students in learning about the role of women in history, which textbooks did not include until 10 or 15 years ago.

From these early efforts, I learned that primary sources provide students with not only rich learning opportunities but also hurdles to overcome, such as recognizing bias and assumptions within the source, understanding new and challenging vocabulary and developing historical literacy, which require teacher guidance. Despite these challenges, I discovered students to be much more apt to persist in learning with primary sources than with secondary reports of the same historical event because they enjoy working with the "real" stuff.

How have you effectively combined primary sources with inquiry to enhance learning for students in your classroom?

Nearly every primary source leads students to as many questions as answers. If you provide students with primary sources that offer diverse or conflicting historical interpretations, they will question who to believe and why one source reported the same event so differently from another source. Primary sources encourage the development of testable hypotheses, connections within students' understandings, construction of new knowledge, and the motivation for further investigations and reflection.

Students, particularly those in middle school, must feel they have a stake in what they're learning or they're not interested. Giving students primary sources so that they can think intelligently, ask questions, investigate and form their own opinions about an issue based on historical evidence is crucial to their engagement in anything we study.

What are your favorite resources available on the Library of Congress Web site? Why?

I've enjoyed perusing the Abraham Lincoln Papers (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/abraham-lincoln-papers/>) and Lincolniana (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/lincolniana/>).

Examining a letter in Lincoln's handwriting is so much more exciting for students than reading its transcription in a secondary source. Also, historical era photographs have tremendous potential for inquiry-based activities. Another one of my favorite collections is Selected Civil War Photographs (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/civil-war-photographs/>).

What advice do you have for teachers who have never tried teaching with primary sources?

Give your students the chance to discover for themselves firsthand how we arrived at the history stories we tell. Whether engaging students with the actual text of a famous document, a political cartoon drawn in response to a pivotal moment in history, or the personal correspondence of a significant historical figure, you will help students to come up with their own questions and learn unexpected things from primary sources.